THE CLOSED DOOR

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'THE WHITE SLAVES OF ENGLAND' &c.

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NOTE.—*It was found on publication that the original title of this book, "The Closed Door," had been used, and this necessitated the adoption of the present one.*

AT
THE CLOSED DOOR

BEING THE

TRUE AND FAITHFUL ACCOUNT OF AN EXPERIMENT IN *PROPRIA PERSONA* OF THE TREATMENT ACCORDED TO PAUPER EMIGRANTS IN NEW YORK HARBOUR BY THE OFFICIALS OF THE AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

BY

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"THE WHITE SLAVES OF ENGLAND," "THE CRY OF THE POOR," ETC., ETC.

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To

C. A. Pearson

THANKS TO WHOM THIS BOOK

WAS WRITTEN

IT IS GRATEFULLY

DEDICATED

CONTENTS

PREFACE

It was long in my mind to investigate the subject on which this book is written; a determination which came to me, I think, after reading a story written by an American, which told of how a wretched Jew hunted from place to place in the Old World hopefully embarked for the New, only to be flung back, the tattered shuttlecock of the two civilizations. The story was one of infinite pathos. One wondered if it could be true. I felt I should like to

see if it could be true, to experiment in my own person if the sons of the giant young Republic could be so cruel to those who come to her, because there is no room for them in the Old World, or because religious and race hatreds render their lives intolerable, or even only in the just hope of a little betterment.

It was in 1896 that I determined to try the experiment, and I remember announcing my intention to that good fellow and strong writer, Morley Roberts, as we sat together one spring afternoon in the parlour of a cottage high up in the Westmoreland hills, overlooking the beauties of Windermere Lake. He said it would be a useful thing to do, that to his knowledge the treatment meted out to poor emigrants from Europe in New York Harbour was very bad indeed; but, he added, that he

did not think that I had either the nerve or the physique to undergo the hardships, the physical and especially the moral suffering which such a voyage would involve. So also it seemed to me at the time, although I had no conception of the real horrors of the task as I afterwards experienced them, for I had just returned to the serene calm and beauty of my Ambleside home from the journey I had taken among the white slaves of England, and the things I had seen had affected me very much. Many of us live on our nerves, and when these have been too sorely tried, there comes collapse. Thus, I may mention, it took me just ten months to recover from the effects of the three months' tour amongst the pariahs of the kingdoms of England, Ireland, and Scotland, which I described in my book, "The

Cry of the Poor," a tour which I undertook too soon after my voyage to America.* I postponed, accordingly, the carrying

* A severe attack of neuroasthenia, which threatened general paralysis, and which lasted the whole of last year, was the consequence of the continued strain and mental suffering of these two squalid journeys.

May I be excused for mentioning matters which are of indifference to the public? My excuse is that my motive in undertaking these various investigations into the conditions of the very poor has been much and often misrepresented. The only incentive to do such work and to write such books is the hope to benefit the poor to some little extent, for by instructing the public as to their miseries, one enlightens that ignorance which is the main cause of it, and the only tangible reward that a writer in this field can hope for, is a little recognition of this motive. It is, believe me, for I speak from experience, infinitely more profitable to write about the dinners and toilettes of duchesses than about the "sop" and the rags of the white slaves, and it is far pleasanter to dine with a Cabinet Minister or an Ambassador, than to dip in the pannikin of a steerage passenger. But there is no other way of teaching the public what and how these people suffer, than by experiencing these sufferings in person.

into effect of my determination, and it was not until the summer of 1900, that I found the leisure and felt the capability of testing the incidence in my own person of the American Emigration Laws. I proposed the scheme to Mr. Pearson, for the *Daily Express*, and, as with any scheme which promises ulterior benefit to the very poor, and the very helpless, it met with his cordial approval. And so I took ship.

The story of my journey was eventually published in the *Daily Express*, and aroused much indignation, especially in New York, where an attempt to refute my charges was made by journalistic friends of the Commissioners of Emigration.

This book is a reprint of these articles, largely added to, both with incidents observed *en route*, and with certain reflections which suggested themselves at the time,

or have since occurred to me. In this form I hope it may be of some service to those who interest themselves in the question of pauper emigration. It will at least show how the restriction of this should *not* be practised. That it may read as an indictment of the officials in New York Harbour is the fault of the facts. There is not a touch of exaggeration in my story. Indeed, much has been toned down or suppressed for respect of my readers.

Many people in England ask for legislation to restrict pauper emigration. Australia proposes to increase in severity the laws which she has already passed to this effect. Let us hope that England will never be guilty of such cruelties to wretched people who knock at her gates, as were tolerated in the last year of the nineteenth

century by America, and that Australia will not blotch the new but already glorious banner of her Commonwealth with the tears of helpless women and children.

ROBERT H. SHERARD.

March, 1902.

THE CLOSED DOOR

CHAPTER I

ON BOARD "LA CHAMPAGNE"

At 11 p.m. on the night of Friday, June 8, I took the emigrant's train at the Gare St. Lazare, in Paris, with a steerage passenger's ticket to New York, *via* La Champagne. At the offices of La Compagnie Transatlantique, where I had bought my ticket that afternoon, I had been asked several questions—as to my name, age, nationality, profession, whether

I had friends to go to, and whether I could show myself in the possession of thirty dollars on arriving at New York.

I had answered all these questions truthfully, but I noticed that no steps were taken to verify my declarations.

Nothing was said to me to point out what would be the inevitable result if I landed in America without that sum of money. It seems to me that the booking-clerks ought to be instructed to explain the law to every person who applies for a steerage passage ticket to the States. A reprint of this law ought to be supplied in his native tongue to every would-be emigrant.

Further, in fairness to their customers

and to themselves, the Companies ought to demand a medical certificate, guaranteeing the applicant's health and freedom from physical defects, knowing, as they do, what a large percentage of immigrants are refused admission to the States on physical grounds. And they should force their agents to take the same precaution.

As I experienced it, had I been an ignorant man of the people, I should have voyaged to America in total ignorance of the American Emigration Laws, there to learn a bitter lesson roughly taught.

Already on passing from the third class waiting-room on to the platform, in the midst of a motley crowd of various nation-

alities, I began to learn the obloquy of poverty.

With rough tones we were ordered, and with rougher movements we were hustled and packed into the low-roofed cars, till each was filled to its utmost with its human freight.

In my compartment were Italians—one a little boy—elsewhere were Greeks, Armenians, Arabs, more Italians, Germans, and Jews from the four corners of Europe. A drunken man made the weary night hideous.

Sleep was out of question. The air heavy with smoke reeked of the garlic that the Italians were munching through the night.

Yet there was interest in the scene. Elation could be seen on all these faces, under the dim flicker of the oil-lamp, and joy was making all these people exuberant and vociferous. The eternal dupery of Hope. Each jolting turn of the clanking wheel seemed to them to bring them nearer to the Eldorado of their dreams. Behind them, the tax-gatherer, hunger in one hand, and the key of the prison door in the other; behind them, the carbineers of the recruiting sergeant of forced conscription, and the wounds and horrid death of mad campaigns; behind them, too, the father-priest, exacting always, who had such terrible stories to tell of what awaited them after the toil and hunger of this life,

the tortures of Purgatory, the eternal flames of Hell. Behind them, the starveling days wherein of the meagre proceeds of their unceasing toil, the King took one half, and the Church a half again, where white bread, or indeed any bread at all, never came to vary the coarse maize polenta, the mess of chestnut-flour eaten without salt, too heavily taxed to buy.

Behind them, all this, and ahead, beyond the seas, the smiling face of a young Republic, where all men are free and equal, where there is no king to take your body and to empty your purse, and no priest to fill your mind with anguished expectations, a land where there is abundant food for all, and where, "Oh,

Guiseppe, to think of it," as one of them said that night, "people eat meat every day, every sacred day that the Madonna gives."

What dreams, I wondered, might be those that night of the young Jewess, who, for weariness, slipped from her seat on to the floor of the carriage, and laid her head against my knees, over which her loosened Venetian hair poured like a stream of ruddy gold.

It was past 5 a.m. when the train at last reached the docks at Havre. Here we were roughly ordered to alight. No official was too petty to exercise authority over the outcasts that we were. Long tables were laid out in the embarkment

shed, on which were spread tin plates, cauldrons of onion soup, and loaves of bread. Alongside lay the ship, but to reach it one had to pass in a long line through a room in which were doctors waiting to render the last kind services of Europe to her deserting children.

I confess that when I heard that every steerage passenger had to be vaccinated before being allowed to go on board, I was of a mind to turn back. Already the sight of the greasy plates, and the battered spoons, and the thick and unctuous odours of the onion soup had revolted my senses. And the sleepless, jolting, pestilential night had so unstrung my nerves that it seemed to me that I could never bear even the

tiny pain of the doctor's lancet. No, no, that wouldn't do at all.

But then I reasoned with myself and made a strong appeal to my vanity. What would Mr. Pearson think if I told him I "funked" my work at the very outset, just for the fear of a tiny pain? So I determined to become sheep-like and apathetic and to suffer all things. If you look at the very poor in their excursions and alarms you will notice their sheep-like and apathetic appearance. It betokens the state of mind into which Nature has schooled them, as the only means whereby they can endure all that life brings them to suffer. It is Nature's anæsthetic. Assume a sheep-like expres-

sion, and an apathetic attitude, and the resulting auto-suggestion will carry you wonderfully well through much that in your ordinary state would appear to you to be unbearable.

Whilst I was waiting in the long *queue* outside the vaccinating shed, through which one had to pass to reach the ship, we were assailed by hawkers. Some had campstools for sale, but most offered flasks of spirits. To serve no doubt as souvenirs of the dishonesty of the Old World, in the bright and regenerate land to which we were going, for the campstools were not only collapsible, but collapsed at first use, and as to the flasks what nameless liquid was it that they contained?

For my part. I purchased a few papers, and having no change, gave a florin to the woman-hawker. She said she would get me change in a minute, and she never returned. And I was a poor shabby emigrant forced to leave my country. Ah! it was indeed high time to seek another world.

As one entered the shed one passed along a low screen to the left, behind which stood a doctor with a lancet in one hand and a bottle of lymph in the other. He was rubicund of face, and his eyes protruded, and his manner was abrupt and violent.

"Strip your coats." "Roll up your sleeves."

The orders came quick and harsh.

"Nobody can embark without being vaccinated."

The shed was clamorous with the wailing of children. Some passengers loudly protested; an American woman indignantly demanded the return of her money. "This is an outrage," she cried. "I am an American citizeness. I travel third because I don't hold with wasting money. I will not submit. I will appeal to the Consul. I will prosecute the Company. It is an outrage, I say."

But outrage or none, the thing had to be gone through, and briskly too.

I had almost a moment of revolt at the tone in which the French doctor ordered

me to roll up my sleeve higher. A jab with a lymph-laden lancet—not painless—and an orange-coloured card was handed to me. On one side was printed the name of the shipping company, and in large type the word "Vaccinated," and on the other in French, German, Italian, a caution to preserve the card to avoid detention.

Then card in hand, one marched past another doctor. One's hat was jerked off, the forehead scanned, a greasy thumb deftly turns down the lower lip, and an "Allez! allez!" drives one forward. There are more officials, officious and commanding, to pass, and at last the gangway is climbed, and the ship is reached.

Here any lingering illusions one may

have had as to one's rights of man are quickly dispelled. We are steerage passengers, emigrants, possibly paupers. We are men and women of no account. The contempt of the sailors for us is undisguised. They roughly turn their backs if any one of us dares, in perplexity, to ask a question. The very cabin-boys contemn us.

"I am not here to answer questions for fellows like you," said an urchin of the ship's crew to me, when I asked him, with extreme politeness—ordering myself lowly and reverently towards my betters—where it would be possible to get a wash.

"You have people to keep you," he added and laughed and swung round on his heel.

One of the keepers of us people was at that moment engaged in grappling with a Croate peasant, who was for invading the second-class saloon, and would not be dissuaded.

"What a cursed pig it is," said the steward dragging him back. The Croate retorted, opposed violence to violence and I looked on. It was ten to one on the peasant, till blue-jacketed reinforcements arrived vociferously, and the man was hustled off forward without any further unpleasantness.

"These foreigners are so unreasonable," said the steerage steward returning to deal with me, "and they talk such a cursed language."

"Yes, there are many tongues," I said.

The man was fairly civil to me. That was, perhaps, because I spoke French. Also, possibly, because he fancied I should be good for at least the dollar which he hoped to extract from me. To the steerage steward each emigrant figures a dollar. Not that he has any right to this dollar, but because he trusts to his gentle arts and pleasant ways to extract it from him.

He told me to follow him and he led me forward, then down, down, down, till the bottom of the ship was reached. This hold was fitted with blocks of bunks, with little passages between the blocks. The beds were in two tiers; each bed was a little wider than a coffin. A straw pallet, a flock

pillow and a rug were the bedding supplied.

He pointed me out a bed I might occupy, in the upper tier, midway in a line of fifty beds. However, espying at the other end of our section of the hold, an unoccupied block—the number of passengers being less than usual—I promptly removed my pallet, pillow and rug to the desert island, and here, during the voyage, lay at nights in misanthropic solitude, with none to the right or to the left, and none beneath me or beyond me, and who shall tell how many hundred cubic feet of air more than my ticket and contract entitled me to enjoy.

The difference between this splendid isolation and what might have been my

nightly condition, packed like a sardine with dirty men to the left, to the right, at head and at foot, and with a dirty man lying separated only by boards and a straw pallet, with all his concomitants upon him and his natural tendencies within him, just over my recumbent body, was indeed great. It helped to rob that steerage passage of half its horrors.

The narrow gangways between the blocks of bunks served at meal-times as dining-rooms and benches, and for tables broad planks were rigged up.

This then was to be my home for seven days and seven nights.

After I had arranged my bed and stowed my meagre belongings in another bunk in

the desert island, I went up on deck, in time to see the arrival of the last train of steerage passengers. This train had come right through from Italy, and the various vans had painted upon them the names of various Italian cities which had disgorged their undesirables. The windows of the long corridor-like vans were barred with iron bars, through which it could be seen that each truck was crammed to crushing point with its human freight. With bustling alacrity the train hurried up to the landing-stage. "Don't go. Don't go. Here's more rubbish," it seemed to cry in the panting and puffing of its engine. And the moment it came to a standstill its passengers were hurried out, shovelled out

as it were and flung into the holds of the ship. Married couples aft, single women amidships, men forward. Push and shove and go. It was as if Europe could not show haste enough in hurrying this motley crowd of men, and women, and children, off the surface of her land, into the ship and away. There was a speed and an eagerness in this rally, that were keenly dramatic.

And now at last the big ship, her moorings unslipped began to move. I went aft to watch the receding land as long as might be. The last spectacle that the city afforded me was that of a drunken woman who fell down in a fit on the quay-side, where she lay surrounded by a

laughing crowd of workmen. "Oh, the happiness," I thought, "to leave all that behind me, to flee to another world, which, because new and unknown, must be a better and a kinder world."

There are five hundred and sixty of us in the steerage, men, women, and children, and our nationalities are various. An old Turk with a hookah pipe is prominent. Knowing that there are Armenian refugees on board, one anticipates possible disturbances. But he is a mild old man, who shares his hookah with his one wife, and during most of the journey is seen dancing exuberantly, clapping his hands and exultant.

It appeared that the steerage stewards

group the emigrants in the steerage in such a way that the nationalities are separated. This is a good arrangement, as it reduces the chances of quarrels and violence. It also keeps apart races which like to be dirty, and, as certain Orientals, respect their personal vermin, to the point of refusing to take their lives. In the part of the hold to which I was assigned were some French-speaking people, the pick of the crowd.

When the ship had been at sea an hour we were all ordered below. Those who did not obey at once were pushed along. Already, before then I had noticed that violence was used to enforce command. From the hold in the forecastle we had

to pass in a long and crowded line the whole length of the steerage rooms, and those of us who had been assigned forward —to the big room—congratulated ourselves on our fortune, as we jostled through the pokey, airless, stenching cabins of our fellow-passengers. Aft we emerged once more, and here handed in our tickets, and then were free again.

At ten the bell rang for dinner. Each table accommodated from ten to twenty passengers, and one man was selected from each mess to go to the kitchen and fetch the food. This was served in tin buckets, and on each bucket were two deep tin dishes, fitting one into the top of the bucket and the other into the dish below.

To each emigrant was assigned a tin plate, a fork and spoon, and a tin cup. No knives were allowed, for, being poor, we were naturally men of criminal and sanguinary instincts. Those who had no pocket-knives tore at their meat with their teeth.

I had noticed, as to the Italian emigrants that each man before being allowed to go on board was rubbed down by the Company's officials, to see that he did not carry a knife on his person, such as might be used in a fight. Small pocket-knives only were allowed to pass.

The dinner consisted of broth, the beef of which it had been made, macaroni, and stewed prunes. The one plate did for *all*.

Midway through the meal the room waiter came round and filled each pannikin three-quarters full of thick black wine.

Our manners were dreadful. We all demonstrated, in our absolute indifference to the comfort or desires of our neighbours, how well-equipped we were for the battle of life. Altruism to the dogs, triumphant individualism.

When we had nearly chewed our way through the stringy meat, the steerage lieutenant came round and laid on each table a card, on which was printed in four languages the following notice: "Emigrants are requested to point out to the purser or steerage lieutenant the men of the board who should claim any

remuneration whatsoever for their services."

While these cards passed from hand to hand were being laboriously spelled out in the different tongues, the "men of the board," otherwise the steerage stewards, looked on with a sarcastic twinkle in their eyes, a perceptible shrug of the shoulders. And no sooner had the steerage lieutenant gone than the rush for the spoil began. It was literal blackmail.

"If you give me three francs or four francs for the passage you will find it worth your while." Those that did pay did find it worth the while. Many did not, many could not, many were paupers like myself. For us there were torrents of abuse at every meal—ours it was to wash the dirty platters, to fetch the

food across the lurching and slippery decks, and while those who had paid toll had plenty of wine and food and bread, the paupers got only what they could snatch.

Yes, it was well worth two francs or three francs to stand well with the stewards. To be bullied, insulted, hustled, and pushed was the hourly experience of those who had not paid.

I confess that after the first day I capitulated and produced the dollar that was demanded of me. There was really no obligation on me to suffer unnecessary humiliation. And I went in wholesome fear of the quartermaster and the 'brig,' or cell, forward. An Englishman cannot stand being struck and pushed, and I knew that

sooner or later I should retaliate and that meant the 'brig,' where my sphere of observation would be limited to the shackles on my legs. So I paid the price of peace, and for the rest of the journey suffered insults and violence only in the persons of my poorer shipmates.

After I "had become reasonable," as the steward over my section put it, he suggested that I might like to mess at the French table, a suggestion with which I fell in the more readily that till then my mess-mates had been Croates. I had no knowledge of their tongue, and this made it difficult to explain, for instance, that when twelve potatoes are put before twelve men, it is not equitable for any one man to

help himself to five and so on. Also these people were dirtier than I had fancied people could be. Sea-sickness troubled them, apparently at table more than elsewhere.

The steward proposed me as an associate to one of the members of the French mess. "Not likely," said this person, a young French Jew, of whom more hereafter. "Let him go to the Transvaal. We want no dirty 'English Spoken' amongst Frenchmen." He was, however, overruled by the president of our mess, a Rochester butcher of Swiss extraction, whom I recognised as the man who on the first night had invaded my desert island and had tried to steal my pillow, fancying

me to be asleep, and on whom I had scattered a few flowers of steerage-hold eloquence. I afterwards learned of him that he had led a riotous life, but that now that he had turned forty he had decided to amend, to put money by and to become rich, which seemed to him synonymous of all the virtues.

The French table was separated from the rest of the hold by my private block, and there was a good light from the port-holes. I found that apart from the young French Jew, there was not a single Frenchman amongst us. Yet our manners aped the graces of France. We never came to fisticuffs over our bucket, and we often said, "If you please," and "May I trouble you

to pass." It was the etiquette that if any man wanted to be sea-sick, he should go amongst the other tables.

CHAPTER II

LIBERTY IN SIGHT

One of the most cruel weapons used by the steerage stewards to bring to reason persons who were unreasonable as to paying the fee they had been ordered not to pay was the privation of drinking-water. I was unable to get a glass of drinking-water more than once during the whole trip. A smart, sturdy American, who was travelling third-class by choice, went for two days without any. The women and

little children suffered dreadfully for want of it during the throes of sea-sickness. Yet water there was in plenty. One had to know how to get it, a thing that I never found out.

On the night of the 14th a body of women, with children in their arms, went aft, surrounded the padlocked cistern, and clamoured for water. They were driven off with abuse and violence. That same night I got into conversation with a very intelligent Armenian, ex-dragoman at Bitlis, who was travelling to California with his wife and three children, accompanied by another Armenian, a friend. He had furnished his steward with backsheesh to the extent of five francs, but could get no water.

"We are all teetotalers," he said. "The steward brings us wine, which is of no use to us. My children are crying all day for water."

Yet those who had paid, or those who had a sufficiency of cheek, got not only all the water they wanted to drink, but an ample supply for washing also.

The rest of us washed in salt water, and dried ourselves on our shirts and handkerchiefs. On the first day the lavatory was locked up. No washing was allowed after eight in the morning, and the hands which grasped the loaves at table vouched for the observance of the rule.

In the irony of things, the bar for steerage passengers was hard by the

padlocked cistern. Here you get beer at 3d. the glass, for the most part three-quarters froth, or spirits, absinthe, cognac, or gin, at 5d. the *petit verre*.

Thirst drove many to the counter. The barman did not disguise his contempt for his customers. On the first two days lemonade in bottles was procurable, but the supply gave out, and the emigrants who were thirsty had either to drink liquor, or to suck oranges at 3d. apiece.

For the extortion practised on the emigrants by the stewards, for the desperate and unfeeling manœuvres with which they endeavour to force money from their meagre purses, it is the company and not its servants that is to blame.

The steerage stewards only receive 8s. a week as wages, and most of them have wives and families to keep. They have to be wolves, and wolves they are, though at heart, as a general rule, as humane as are most Frenchmen.

Under insult, contempt, and violence, hope kept us buoyant. And scanty as were the rations which the recalcitrants obtained, the life was to many, as compared to previous existence, one of luxury. There was meat twice a day, and for those who could hustle and snatch enough bread. And to how many of us had there ever been in the past enough bread?

To some of us, Italians, and others, white bread was such a luxury that if, after

we had satisfied our appetites, we could steal an extra loaf we used to stow it away in our bags, as a provision for the first days in America. An Assyrian thus imported a stone of breadstuff into New York.

And then the long hours of idleness, under the sun, as we stretched our labour-loosened limbs upon the deck and tasted an unfamiliar repose! How sweet the air was to the children of the slums and Ghettos of Europe! To us, poor emigrants, the equal skies and seas allotted their sights of splendour just as to the envied and elegant crowd that lolled in easy chairs upon the upper decks. Nature is the great republican.

At all times, however, a vague fear harassed even the most contented. The question that each one constantly asked of himself was: "Will they let me in?" Many had heard of the American emigration laws for the first time on the boat—the agents who had sold them their tickets having avoided asking indiscreet questions, lest the deal and their commission with it should be lost.

Anyone who could give any information on the law was eagerly listened to. A butcher who was going to Detroit plunged us all into the depths of despair by informing us that the law had become very strict indeed. "Nobody will be admitted who can't show two thousand francs."

"Oh, it's not so bad as that," said an American: "any young fellow who is smart and strong and has a trade will be let through if he can show he has got a week's board over and above his fare to wherever he is going to."

This was comfort to some, but a grey shadow fell upon the faces of many of us who were neither strong nor young. "Will they let me in?"

I could not but admire the confidence of many in their ability to evade the law. There was at my table, a Spanish-American who had no money and no belongings beyond a very formidable knife and a pack of cards. He was always pestering me to play with him. Picquet, or should we call

it, ecarté. As there was nothing to be got from him, except perhaps a taste of his *navaja*, and probably much to lose, he did not find many partners. I should have thought him a most undesirable emigrant and fully expected to fall in with him at Ellis Island. But he passed the barrier without any difficulty, big knife, cards and all.

"It's assurance you want," opined Carlo, a young Italian cook who had been to America before. "You walk up to the desk as if you had no time to waste talking, but have big business waiting for you outside. And you say 'Yes, yes, that's so,' and you pretend to pull the dollars out of your pocket."

At other times conversation would turn on the prospects of getting work in the States. The unskilled labourers among us who had had vague ideas of devoting our energies to the washing of plates or to waiting at table in small restaurants were much discouraged to hear that the time was the worst time of the year for city employment. Work could, however, be found in plenty in the country in haymaking. I made many inquiries on this subject, and must have passed among my messmates as a future haymaker. My anxiety, be it observed *en passant*, was diametrically opposed to that of my fellow-emigrants. My hope, of course, was that in my case the law would be rigorously applied, that I

should be detained and put through all that treatment that is meted out to the unwelcome emigrant.

Otherwise the horrible discomfort of the steerage passage on a French liner would have been endured for very little information, beyond this—that of all animals in creation, man, when he is dirty, is the very dirtiest. So when kind-hearted fellows wished to console me and said, "Don't you worry, you'll get through all right," they were to me, without suspecting it, Job's comforters indeed.

Having spoken of the "horrible discomfort of a steerage passage on a French liner," I should substantiate this statement.

We had three meals a day. Breakfast,

consisting of black coffee and bread and butter—unlimited for those who had "squared" the steward, but for the recalcitrants limited, even to vanishing point—was served at half-past six. After breakfast, a ration of tafia (spirits), in the same proportions, was allotted to each passenger.

Déjeûner, consisting of the three-decker gamelle, red wine, and some kind of dessert, came at ten, and dinner, which was a repetition of déjeûner, less the dessert, was served at five. Bouillon, beans, boiled beef, prunes, or stewed apples were the staple dishes. Once or twice we had a codfish, and once roast meat with salad. One day roast chicken was served to our amazement. What liberality was this that

put on our tables birds so rich and gamey that we might fancy ourselves eating a well-hung pheasant? Perhaps the saloon passengers did not like their poultry well-hung.

It was substantial enough and satisfying to our sea-air-whetted appetites. Many ate with wolfish eagerness. An Arab was pointed out who disposed of two 2lb. loaves—to the prejudice of his mess-mates at every meal, and there was a poor old Jew, of whom more hereafter, who was constantly being taunted by the steward for eating the best part of the gamelle "on his own" without ever dreaming of doing the right thing—cursed pig that he was—by the attendants,

For myself, what inconvienced me mainly was the dirtiness of the tables, and of the hold during the day time. This was mainly the fault of emigrants themselves.

Men spat everywhere, and wherever nausea took a man, there did he relieve himself. During the first four days our hold was a very dreadful place, and it required some courage to clamber down the many steps from the sweet, fresh air above.

The shocking privation of water has already been described. The lavatories forward were indescribably filthy, though aft they were better kept. I pitied the women, to whom even a moment's privacy during the whole of the eight days' voyage was denied.

As to the women, those who were good-looking received the pressing attentions of the stewards. After the fall of night courtings were here and there in progress. And the pretty girls, like the men who had paid or those who were cunning, had abundance of whatever the kitchens afforded.

As to a more serious grievance that a passenger might formulate against the company, I am hardly qualified to speak authoritatively. I must state, however, that a technical man—an American seafarer—who was on board, asserted that in case of a collision the loss of life would be as terrible as it was on board La Bourgogne.

At no time, either day or night, and of

this I repeatedly convinced myself, were the bulkheads ever closed from extreme forecastle to extreme stern. Not once was boat-drill practised on board. Not one-tenth of the emigrants knew where the life-belts were, or how to use them. The number of boats was inadequate for the number of souls on board. We were more than 1,100 men, women, children, all told, and there were certainly not more than twenty boats, if as many. I could only shudder at the thought of the mad struggle that would break out in these crowded holds in case of collision ; the fighting masses, the busy knives, the frantic *sauve-qui-peut.*

At night, when every man lay stretched out, comfortless, in his narrow bunk, under

the glare of the electric lamps, as in a monster morgue, I wondered what many nightmares brooded over all these sleepers, what keen perplexities, what shifting hopes, what dread of the unknown ahead.

I fancy that on the last night of all many were more keenly exercised in their minds than they cared to show as to what would be their treatment if indeed the door was closed against them, and around anyone who could give information anxious groups collected. "The emigrants who are sent back," said a steward, "are expected to make themselves generally useful on board." "I met in Paris," said a young Englishman, "three Italians who had been sent back, and they told me they had been employed

in swabbing the decks and in chipping paint." This young man told me that he had no money, and was doubtful as to whether he would be allowed to land. He implied that he had got into trouble at home. On the whole an undesirable, I fancied. He was emphatic in declaring that they would not get *him* to swab decks or to chip paint. He was not to be put to this ordeal, for he passed through all right.

There were many Italians on board who did not know that there was any emigration law in the States and would not believe that it was necessary for a man to have at least thirty dollars to be allowed to land. "*Trenta scudi! Trenta scudi!*" cried one,

"I never had such a sum in my life." The agents who had sold them their tickets had been careful not to inform them of the American law's requirements, for fear of losing custom and commission. An Italian peasant or workman is a cautious man, who would not spend his money on a ticket if he feared any risk of losing its value.

There were many Jews on board, Jews from all parts of the old World and these for the most part had taken all precautions. I looked in vain amongst them for the poor, hunted outcast driven from pillar to post and back again of whom I had read in the story. I was to see him, in many types, later on.

The Greeks seemed more careless, and

danced winding dances, with waving arms the life-long day.

The young French Jew who had objected to the admission of an Englishman to the French mess, became confiding as the days passed. He was in some trepidation. He feared he might be turned back.

"I ran away from home to serve my father out. I shall reach New York with only a few francs in my pocket. But I have a cousin in New York who like myself is in the fur-trade and I daresay he will be able to get me through. It would be awful to be sent back to Havre." I described my own position, a writer without money or friends in America, as much

worse than his. He was young and had a trade. He admitted that his position was very much the better one, and the comparison seemed to comfort him mightily. And the more he felt it his duty to discourage me, the easier he seemed to be in his mind as to his own prospects.

With nearly six hundred people of different nationalities to observe at such close quarters, there was to me no monotony in the eight days' journey. Almost every variety of character was represented. On the whole, however, I am sorry to say one's observations of these characters were such as to incline one to pessimism. Whenever I have mixed with the very poor, it has occurred to me how they weaken their

position by sacrificing each to his individuality the interests of the collectivity. There is no possibility of joint action against a common evil in these wretched people, in whom even the conception of solidarity is absent. Despised and repelled by all, each adds to the miseries of his fellows by violence, brutality, and the curse of selfishness. Each man is against his neighbour and the result is that this mass of people which, bound together in the brotherhood of common suffering might be powerful enough to force society to some recognition of their rights to, at least the necessaries of life, is split up into as many penniless, ragged, dirty and therefore powerless individualities as there are members.

Those in this steerage crew who had been able to fee the stewards looked down with contempt on their poorer shipmates, and they in turn were despised by the lofty aristocrats, who having feed the steerage lieutenant were admitted to the glories and luxury of his private table. Another class were those who toadied to the cooks, and in exchange for various menial services, peeling potatoes, washing dishes, and the like, received the broken meats of the saloon passengers. Push and self confidence reaped here also their reward. The timid and diffident went to the wall, the others, and amongst these the Jews were noticeably prominent, encroached, and widely extended their

privileges. There were three hideous little Jewish boys whom I saw during the whole of the voyage, laden with delicacies from the first-class kitchens. I often noticed them walking about on the first-class deck.

Many of the better dressed passengers were careful to explain how it was they came to travel third. They would not admit that it was by necessity. They said that had they only known what undesirable companions we were, they would certainly have gone second. Yet none of them had taken advantage of the right to change classes during the first two days. I suppose that they had not had time, during the period allowed by the Company

for steerage passengers to change their minds, to guage our unpleasantness, and that we were unpleasant I cannot deny. You can't get very clean on salt water, even if we had cared about being very clean, and I hardly like to say what some did with the little tin pannikins which were intended for drinking purposes. Those who shaved used them as shaving dishes, others as wash-hand-basins and there were yet other uses. Now these pannikins were never washed, but after each meal or other use were flung into a common heap for the next meal.

Pictures often rise up before my eyes of that strange voyage—less the wonderful sights that sky and sea and passing ships

afforded in the thousand and one effects of sun and cloud and star and moon, than little scenes of human interest, groups of curious types, rough amourettes, encounters, postures and assemblies. Thus a white-haired lady distributing largesse of dessert from the first-class deck amongst a crowd of Italian children, on the deck below, vivid in the colours of their clothes, vital, animated in their cries and movements. Some dusky gamblers lying on the deck round a bright red rug on which they dealt the greasy cards. A patriarchal Armenian reading the Bible to his generations. Women knitting placidly, interminably. The Greeks dancing, dancing as if life were all one dance. The Jews

chaffering, bantering with their racial animation.

Some of the pictures were almost tragic. Thus that of the women clamouring round the padlocked cistern for water for their children. And then again one which in my mental gallery, I have labelled "The Fight for Bread." The French mess, being specially protected by the steerage steward who had received a dollar from each messmate, had always in reserve in one of the empty bunks in my desert-island, a large supply of loaves. The recalcitrants, those who had been unreasonable in the pariah land beyond had never enough bread to eat. And one day at dinner-time a haggard group came forward

in a gang clamouring in various tongues for our superfluity. Their faces were wolfish, their gestures full of menace. They flourished their pocket-knives, their eyes glared and they extended their necks. And we sat fat and eupeptic around our well-spread board, with our ample reserve well-guarded behind us. It was as in a well-staged *tableau vivant*, the whole Social Question put on that slippery stage.

And well-fed or hungering all we of the steerage were objects of curiosity to the saloon passengers. It amused me to watch on the faces of those on the upper deck what sentiments our aspect inspired to different people. In some it was disgust, in many mere curiosity, in most contempt.

Some were offensively compassionate, and here was the Social Question put on to the stage again.

This must be said for our tyrants, the steerage stewards, that they were vigilant in the protection of our dignity. Sometimes the curiosity of the saloon-passengers would bring them peeping and peering into our kennel, with little ohs and ahs and nervous gigglings. Then our stewards would rush forward and "Get out of this" they would cry, "You have no business in here. We don't come pestering into the first-class saloon to see how you ladle your grub down your throats. Get out, and a bit quick, please."

As the close of the voyage drew near,

the discussions on the Emigration Laws became more general. Even the gentleman with the big knife and the pack of cards began to show signs of nervousness. The young French Jew assailed me with questions. Anybody who could explain the law in all its bearings was eagerly listened to.

Great was our anxiety till at two on the morning of Sunday, the 17th, there rose up before us, in the night, what gave to all fresh courage and a stronger hope. Holding high the torch which illuminates the world, the statue of Liberty welcomed to the great Republic the outcasts of the older world.

CHAPTER III

HELD

TOWARDS the end of the journey we were summoned *en masse* on to deck, and made to pass before the ship's doctor. Then a card was handed to each passenger, an "Inspection Card," covered with official stamps and bearing in red ink a printed number and letter, this being the passengers classification on the ship's list or manifest. At the bottom of the card were spaces numbered from 1 to 14, "to be

punched by ship's surgeon at daily inspection." As there never was any inspection, except the one referred to above, this precaution seems a farce. The spaces were not punched, but blue-pencilled, as though to indicate that the U.S.A.'s requirements had been complied with. Which was not the case. For myself I do not complain of the laxity. That one "inspection" was a sufficient ordeal; we were more than three hours standing massed on the wet deck, with the spindrift driving over us, crushing, steaming, swearing and foul. There were men and women in the mass who were sick, and many fought, and all blasphemed. The cooks and stewards and sailors who were

off watch darted in now and again into our compact mass and clutched at the breasts of our women-folk. It was the most trying time of all the passage.

After this ceremony we were sent down to our hold, by way of the lobby where the bar was. Here the steerage steward sat at a table with a big register before him. Each passenger was told to sign his name as he passed on. Nothing was said as to the reason of this and those who hesitated at giving their signature were told that if they didn't sign they wouldn't be allowed to land. "You don't think we want to use your signature to draw your account out of Rothschild's bank, perhaps," was a remark

I heard. I afterwards learned that the statement to which we had appended our signatures was a certificate to the effect that we had no complaints whatever to make about the food, bedding and attendance in the steerage and that we had been regularly supplied with our lawful rations of wine and water.

After disembarking from La Champagne on to the wharf of La Compagnie Transatlantique, and after the Custom House officers had discharged their duties in a civil and expeditious manner, we had a long wait before the barge was ready in which we were to be conveyed to the Barge Office (formerly Castle Gardens), to be passed through the sieves of the

medical officers, and of the inspectors of the Emigration Board.

Meanwhile those among the 560 of us who were American citizens, shouldered their baggage and passed out triumphantly, through the well-guarded barrier which stood between us and the outer world. Sitting on our sacks and bundles on the floor, we watched their brisk departure with envious eyes.

A weary hour, two weary hours passed. At last orders were issued to group ourselves by the letters which were printed on our inspection cards, and presently, after much confusion, we had formed ourselves into twenty-five groups. My letter was the letter O.

Then at the extreme end of the wharf, where through the open doors one saw the sea, a man appeared erect on a barrel, waving in his hands a tin plate on which was painted the letter A. Briskly the first group filed out through the open doors, each man wearing in his hat his inspection card, with the red letter displayed.

By groups we emerged, and so across a plank, past officers, into a two-storied barge, where each group was roped in separately. Then a tug took the barge in charge, and we were taken away from the wharf and conveyed to the barge office.

Just as we were moving away the antics of a man on the wharf, who had been

helping in unmooring the barge, attracted the attention of the emigrants, and some laughed. "Laugh away, you —— pack of —— foreign swine. There's a lot of you —— who'll get sent back," was his retort. It was decidedly chilling.

I have written that a tug took our barge in charge. The phrase has an ugly jingle, but there is no other expression for it. The tug was moored alongside the barge, not ahead of it, and hustled us along like a policeman hustling a man along by the arm. The tug was very small, and the barge was very big, and there was in this a symbol of the superior force of authority over mere mass. And the superior force of authority we

were shortly to experience, and to the full.

Till then we had been treated—that is to say, from Havre outwards—much as sheep, or perhaps as pigs. On landing, metempsychosis manifested itself. We might consider ourselves dangerous and maleficent animals. On every side were bars, bars of wood and of iron. We were encaged, and at every corner stood, virulent and violent, an emigrant tamer.

"Vorwaerts!" "Avanti!" "Now, then, get on."

Step by step we crowded forward, through the entrance shed, up a flight of stairs. To the left of the landing were a few more steps, guarded by a white-haired

official in a blue uniform. It was his duty to arrange us in single file, so that man by man we could pass singly before a doctor, who stood a few yards down the passage.

And it was by this white-haired official that I saw the first act of brutal violence committed upon an emigrant. Behind me was a sturdy Italian, who, not understanding the order given in English, attempted to come up alongside of me. The old man seized him by the shoulders, and pushed him back. The Italian slipped and fell back to the place from which he had been dislodged. Then the official very violently flung him back again, using his fists, and, "Yes, that's me," he said.

The fatigue of the eight-day steerage passage, with its sleepless nights, the nervous strain, and the keen anxiety I had felt since starting as to the success of my enterprise, no doubt showed themselves. For when I passed before the young doctor he detained me a moment, and as he passed me on made a sign to another sanitary service man, who was acting as janitor to a kind of sheep-pen. When I reached this official he seized my arm, felt my pulse, and then pushed me in amongst other suspicious cases waiting for further and fuller examination. Meanwhile the stream of emigrants trickled by drop by drop. Now and again another physical suspect was hustled in among us. The

others turned to the right and took up their places in lines, between iron balustrades. to pass one by one before the desks of the several inspectors of emigration.

The only person amongst the suspicious cases whom I knew was an old Swiss gentleman with whom I had conversed on the voyage. He was visiting America merely to see his daughter, and had a return ticket in his pocket. He was well supplied with money, and had travelled third-class only from national thrift. He was in good health, but the fatigue and discomfort of the voyage had given him a touch of feverishness. He was, however, detained for some time, and narrowly escaped being sent back to Europe. When

our pen was full to overflowing we were ordered to go to the medical inspection room. "Leave your baggage here and go down the steps," was the order. "Why the devil don't you obey orders," said an S.S. man to a woman who did not understand English and who had picked up her bag. Then he threw himself forward and tore the bag from her hand with such violence that she was knocked down, and "Perhaps you understand now," said the S.S. man.

After passing down a few steps I came into the inspection room. Here a middle-aged doctor motioned me to a seat, and I sat down beside an old woman who had a weakly child in her arms. She had a card

in her hands, on which was written in pencil some hieroglyphics and the word "Hold." I was not attended to first, and had time to hear and to observe.

"Say, doctor," cried one of the young medical assistants, glorious in a new S.S. uniform, "come and look at this old scab." The old scab was an Arab.

"That whole family over there is good to hold," said another.

"I have had nothing but hearts in this lot," said a third, with such an intonation that I wondered where his might be.

Presently the doctor came up to me, and addressing me in German, bade me put a thermometer under my tongue and close my lips. It had just been removed

from the mouth of another "old scab," who had been sitting opposite to me. So there I sat sucking the glass tube and watching Medicine in a new part, not assuaging, but investigating—a healing angel no longer, but suspicious and detective. After some minutes the doctor again approached me, and removed the thermometer. He gave a glance at it, and then scribbled on a card, "38 degrees. Hold."

I took it without giving any sign that I understood its meaning. But it was not as a physical failure that I was to be refused admission to the New World, for presently the doctor returned and addressed me again in German.

"I am an Englishman," I said.

"Oh, are you?" he answered. "What's wrong with you?"

"I'm all right," I said; "I haven't had any sleep for thirty-six hours, and have been standing about most of the night and all the morning."

"Oh is that all? You are very shaky."

"Eight days in a French steerage."

"All right. Here goes." And so saying, he tore up my card, and scribbled "O. K." on another, and handed it to me. So I emerged once more into the pen above, while those who were not "orl korrect" passed down some stairs and vanished from sight.

From the pen I was passed on to take

my place in one of the lines that man by man went by the inspector. There were four such queues, each separated from the other by iron balustrades. Above the clamour of the room rose the *leit-motiv* of it all. For at the far end of the big hall was a long money-changer's desk, whence proceeded the continuous rattle of copper, silver, and gold. In the Babel of tongues, in the confusion of voices, the word dollars, dollars, dollars, was alone to be distinguished.

Whilst I was waiting in my place in the queue until my turn came to be "dealt with" by the inspector at his desk. I noticed in a kind of enclosure or waiting-room, the Armenian gentleman to whom

I have referred in a previous chapter. He was with his wife and children, and seemed in considerable distress.

"I hope that nothing has gone wrong with you," I said. "They never mean to send you back with all those children."

"No, I am all right," he said. "It's my friend, the other Armenian, who is in trouble. They won't pass him. It appears that there is something wrong with his eyes and they speak of sending him back. I am waiting here to try and get a word with him, but nobody will answer any questions, and I don't know where to find him. He was coming with us out to California where we are going to try fruit-farming. If he is sent back, where will

he go to? I have told you his story, and you know that he has nowhere to go to. He had all sorts of difficulties in getting his passport and permission to leave Turkey, for the Turks like us Armenians so much that they won't let us leave them. He had to bribe all sorts of petty officials and it was not till he had spent about ten sterlings" (£10, I suppose, he meant), "that he got his passport and could quit Turkish territory. But he was only allowed to go on the formal and signed undertaking never again to set foot in Turkey, and this under the heaviest penalties of imprisonment and torture. So that his home, such as it was, is closed against him. And if the Americans send him back, where will

he go to and what will become of him, poor fellow."

I did my best to cheer him and with a shake of the hand moved on. As I did not see this Armenian again in our prison, I hope he was eventually let through.

Whilst still waiting in the slowly moving queue I listened to the following conversation in German at the inspector's desk between that official and the man at the head of the queue.

"What money hast thou?"

"Eight francs."

The second person singular, an insulting mode of expression used on the Continent only in addressing inferiors, was invariably employed, in whatever language might be

used by the officials in speaking to the emigrants.

"But that won't do."

"I have a check."

"Show it."

The cheque having been produced and examined, the next question was :—

"What art thou?"

"A butcher."

The inspector hesitated, and looked the man over. He was a fine, strapping, healthy fellow. Down came the stamp of approval on the inspector's card, and the butcher passed on.

It was now my turn. I answered truthfully, as I had made my declaration in Paris, the questions as to my identity.

As to my profession, I described myself as a "copy-writer," a statement deceitful only in its ambiguity.

"A bit of a literary man, I suppose," said a man who was standing by the inspector's desk. I nodded assent.

"Coming over here to write a book about America, I guess," he added, with an undisguised sneer.

"What money have you got?" snapped the man behind the desk.

"Only a few dollars," I said. "But I expect to find money at the Post Office."

"Show us your money."

But he never looked at it. Already he had drawn towards him a "Detention card." On this he wrote my name, the

date, and the name of the ship which had brought me from Europe. Under the heading. "Cause of detention," he wrote the letters "L.P.C."

He pushed this card into my hand, and told me to move on. Not knowing where to move to, I was dallying in front of the money-changer's desk when an official, espying the detention card in my hand, caught me by the arm and swung me round to the right. I stumbled down three or four steps, and found myself in a large waiting-room filled with the most dismal crowd of men, women, and children. In front of a small table stood a thick-set ruddy man, who barred my further progress.

"Your card, here," said he. "Oh, English, are you? English, is it, or Oirish?

"English," I said.

"Then stand back there," he cried, as though speaking to a dog.

When the man behind the table had entered the particulars on my card into a register before them it was thrust into my hand, and I was told to "Get on, there." I got on, and was for joining my fellow-prisoners. But before I had taken many steps, a youth in spectacles intercepted me, and planking down on a table a bowl of greasy soup, in which floated a lump of meat and a chunk of grey bread, he said,

"Here you are, young feller, and it won't cost you nothing, either."

I began to look about me.

CHAPTER IV

ELLIS ISLAND

THERE were fully three hundred people, men, women, and children in this detention room, which was barred and bolted and fenced and guarded like the prison that it was. People of every nationality were there—Germans, Italians, Russians, Poles, and in myself Great Britain also was represented. There was a family attired in sheep-skins, the wool turned inwards, whose nationality puzzled me.

But most pitied by me were three poor Jews—one the little old man who had been so often rated on board our ship for eating too much; the other two, an elderly ménage. We had called the husband Fagin on the boat, and indeed, he resembled Cruikshank's presentment. As to the little old man, it was a pathetic sight. He had made himself so spruce to enter America, and his poor coquetry had been in vain. His card was marked "Excluded." He will leave Ellis Island only for the ship that will shift him back, hopeless, to the port where, with some hopes, he recently embarked.

As to the Jewish ménage, I fear their fate is the same. The old man showed me

his card and that of his wife. Both were marked "Senility." I had not the heart to tell him that the cause of their detention was perhaps the only one which cannot be overcome.

What a sad crowd it was! What sorrowful faces, what attitudes of incipient despair! The air was loud with the wailing of children. Women were sobbing here and there. Busy young men with blocks of yellow telegram forms pushed through the crowd. "Who wants to telegraph to his friends?"

Many availed themselves to these offers. And let me say "right here" that it was stated and emphatically maintained to me by more than twenty of my fellow-prisoners

that a large percentage of those telegrams are never forwarded, and that those which are forwarded are so curtailed both as to address and contents that they are unintelligible and useless.

I have one clear case in proof of this charge, that of a Jewish lady who on the previous Saturday had sent a telegram to a friend through one of these officials, which elicited no response. On the next day she sent another telegram to the same friend through a different official—a German, who was described to me as the only honest man in the pack—and was fetched away within two hours. Her friend had never received the first telegram.

Gross over-charges were made in my

presence for these telegrams. A poor Russian Jew dictated a telegram, for which the fee was twenty-one cents. He handed the official a Russian two-rouble piece (worth about a dollar). "That makes it right," said the fellow. And there were other cases in which the ignorant emigrants were robbed in the same way in my presence. I was also informed that any letters written by the prisoners were opened, read, and might be detained.

On week days the prisoners are kept at the Barge Office from six a.m. to five p.m., when they are shipped back to Ellis Island. On Sundays, however, the Barge Office is cleared at two o'clock, and shortly after that hour had struck we were ordered to

"get out there, tutti-quanti," and hustled out to the landing pier, where another barge was in waiting for us with a tug alongside. At every corner of the descent was an official, each more brutal of tongue than the last. Woman were elbowed forward, children roughly propelled.

But this was rare courtesy compared to the treatment we received once we were packed on the barge. Metempsychosis again manifested itself. We had become hardened and desperate criminals at best, for the most part feeble old men, little children, and women, weeping and forlorn.

Here, for the first time, the stick came in evidence. There were three fellows, prison warders in shirt sleeves, to guard

us, and each carried a bludgeon. If an order to "get back there, you swine," was not instantly obeyed (and often the wretched foreigner had no idea what was wanted of him), the stick enforced the command.

During the trip to Ellis Island I was in conversation with a Roumanian family, also Jews. The man was a smart and keenly intelligent young fellow of thirty-six, very neatly dressed. His wife and two little girls, one of three, and the other in arms, were with him. His card was marked "Excluded with Family." It was a very pitiful story that he had to tell.

"My name is Srul Bick. I am a Jew. I come from Hertsa. I had a store there,

and was doing well, getting from twenty to twenty-five dollars a week. I thought I could do better for my family in America, and as my sister was coming over—she had 2,000 dollars with her—I decided to come also. We crossed in the Patricia."

"We had no need to come," cried the wife, who had borrowed a cigarette from me and was smoking it, tearfully. "I implored Srul not to go. Even after he had sent off our luggage, I insisted on its being fetched back. I told him to go first, to leave me only two hundred francs. But he would come, and here we are in the depths of misery. I am dying of anguish, and look at my babies."

"My sister got through," said Srul.

"She had 2,000 dollars. I was taken to the doctor. The doctor said, 'I don't think you are strong enough to be in America!' He marked my card, 'Excluded,' and sent me here with my family. I have been on Ellis Island many days. My cousin came to claim me. He was told to get out. I am dying of despair. My wife and children will be taken from me as soon as we reach Ellis Island. I cannot see them nor speak to them till the next morning. I could throw myself into the water. I see my children plague. They are accustomed to have four pints of milk a day. Here they get dry bread and uncooked prunes. I see land and I cannot reach it. I weep all night. Each hour is a year."

And then his haggard wife, pushing the tears from her eyes, comforted him, like a good woman, "I tell my husband, lieber Herr, that this must end soon. It is not a question of years. We shall outlive it all. If we go back, as we shall, we shall be together. The Dreyfus was five years on Devil's Island. True, it was not so bad as ours. He was separated from his wife and children. Yet God gave him strength to resist, and all came well in the end. God will protect us also."

Srul then went on to tell me what to expect at Ellis Island. We had to sleep on an old excursion steamer. A piece of dry bread was the only ration issued. The stick was everywhere used. One of the guards

was a Portugee, a very bad man, with a very big stick. The boat was full of vermin.

Meanwhile, the barge had reached Ellis Island, and had been moored beside what looked like a dismantled excursion steamer, the Narragansett, which lay alongside the island shore.

"Alles Frau" (incorrect German, meaning "Everything Female") was the order issued, and one by one the women, carrying or dragging their howling babies, passed over the rope-barriers and down the gangway on to the prison ship. A man who had not understood the "Alles Frau" order was driven back with a blow on the head from a stick.

Then came our turn. Crossing a nar-

row promenade-deck, we passed into what had formerly been one of the saloons of the steamer. It was divided into two parts by an iron railing. Beyond the railing to the left was the staircase, leading to the upper saloons, where the women and children were confined. Through the bars we could see the island. The dreaded Portugee, stick in hand, kept watch over the wicket in this railing.

Behind it was the governor of the prison-ship, with a tidy bludgeon in his hand, rocking himself on a chair, his feet high up against the wall, a large cigar in his mouth.

A huge blood-hound lay under a table behind him, and eyed us menacingly, licking

his chops. To the right was a large room filled with bunks, with wire mattresses and grey blankets, one to each bed. This room was quite full, each bunk had its wretched occupant.

"Get downstairs," cried one of the attendants, pointing to a doorway at the extreme left of this entrance-hall. We obeyed, but finding ourselves in total darkness, drew back. One man going forward emerged by a side-issue on to the threshold of the compartment behind the railings. Here he was met by a massive matron. Roman, dramatic, and warlike. "You shall not come in here. I tell you to go down below. Go down at once. You dare to take one step forward!"

For myself, I addressed myself to the bad man with the big stick. "You stay here, or there (pointing to the narrow promenade-deck outside), or go below. Only don't you dare to come through this door.

So as the venturing below in total darkness was out of the question, I stayed where I was, and sat down on my "grip" on the floor, and lit my pipe, shaking with laughter.

CHAPTER V

THE NIGHTMARE SHIP

It appears—though at the time we did not know—that there were on Ellis Island that day, also in confinement, two persons no less distinguished than the pardoned Irish "Invincibles," Joseph Mullet and James Fitzharris, otherwise "Skin the Goat." No doubt, on the principle of "à tout seigneur, tout honneur," they were accommodated elsewhere and otherwise. They were certainly not on the ship.

They have since been returned to Europe.

These men declared at the Barge Office —in spite of the fact that they have enjoyed exceptional privileges—that they have been worse treated by the United States Government than during any time of their incarceration in the English prisons. And that is undoubtedly true, Yet to the old men, the weak women. and the little children among us far worse treatment was awarded than to these ex-convicts. I am certain, for instance, that no warder on Ellis Island ventured to strike either of them.

To most of us the long hours of that Sunday afternoon must have dragged by

with indescribable weariness. For myself, I found the time all too short to listen to the many sad stories that were told me, to read the inscriptions in many tongues which were scribbled in pencil on the walls.

A Frenchman had written :—

> Dans ce malheur oú regne la souffrance
> On abrége les jours des enfants de la France.

A German had written a long statement beginning :—"Ich bin nie in so einer Schule gewesen," in which he compared the 'school' of Ellis Island to Hell, and ended up with the plaintive question, "Wie kann man doch Leute so quaelen?"

A long Hebrew graphitus puzzled me, and I asked a Jew rabbi, who was a fellow-prisoner, to tell me what it meant. But he

shook his head with a smile after he had read it. I suppose it was such anathema on the Immigration Commissioners, and the Ellis Island warders that with the usual cautiousness of his race he feared to compromise himself by reading it out in English.

A vigorous denunciation of the Yankees and their arrangements appeared above the signature of an Englishman hailing from Forest Road.

Whilst I was copying some of these inscriptions into the *carnet* de voyage of my Squalid Journey, my attention was attracted by some one sobbing much louder than the rest. I looked up and recognized with some amusement the

young French Jew who had come over with me.

He was in terrible distress.

I told him he ought to be ashamed of himself to snivel like that when he had only to compare his situation and prospects with those of nearly everybody else in the prison. "Look at that old Russian," I said, "He is penniless, and he will be landed in Hamburg without a cent thousands of miles away from his home."

He said, "I will throw myself into the water. I will throw myself into the water."

"Then the dogs will fetch you out," I said," and you'll probably get the stick from the Portugee with the striped coat.

And you'll be very wet and clammy. Don't talk nonsense, and be a man."

So I turned to the wall again and read the thoughts and maxims of my predecessors.

But there was no need of documentary evidence to convince oneself of the horror of the place, of the injustice and inhumanity which had consigned to it so many hundred sufferers, innocent of everything but poverty or ill-health. For the first, one had but to look round the filthy ship, bare of every convenience, with not a seat to sit on, the floor, the only resting-place, covered with dirt and vermin, the walls defaced with obscene drawings and inscriptions. For the second, one had but

to ask questions, and here are some of the stories that I heard.

A young man, who looked woefully distressed, at first attracted my attention. He was a German, named Scheller.

"I came over on the Wallachia, with my wife and little child," he said. "I had our tickets to proceed by railway, and I had about 200 dols. in cash. Three days before we reached New York my child fell ill of measles. When we reached the Barge Office I was separated from my wife and child, and I was sent to Ellis Island, where to-day I have been nine days without any news whatever of my family. I cannot communicate with her. I am refused her address. I do not know

if my baby is living or dead. My wife also is ignorant as to where I am. Shall I ever see them again? I am eating out my heart."

Another sturdy, young German husband, with such a good, honest, ravaged face, had been treated in the same way. His child had had scarlatina. He had been separated from wife and child and imprisoned four days. A word of news about their dear ones would have brought inexpressible relief to these unhappy hushands and fathers. Yet that one word, that little drop of comfort, was ruthlessly denied to them.

"We can't be bothered with these cursed emigrant swine," was the argu-

ment. "The people don't want them here, anyway."

When I started from Europe on this investigation I understood that an emigrant who was excluded as a pauper was deported home again by the earliest steamer belonging to the line which had conveyed him to America; and I had expected to spend four days in Ellis Island, and then to be sent back to France on board La Champagne. But, after a very little conversation, I heard that terrible delays took place before final deportation; that there were people on the prison ship who had been detained there twenty, thirty, and forty days.

I learned that the "bad man with the

big stick," the Portuguese warder, was a detained emigrant also. This Legree in petto had arrived in New York without a cent in his pocket, three months previously, and while awaiting deportation had consented to make himself useful with his stick among his fellow-prisoners. He was just then going to be sent back to Europe to apply his energies elsewhere.

Among the women-folk upstairs—I interviewed her next day—was an old Italian woman, by name Maria Levata. One could hear her sobbing all day long. She had come from Naples, and having insufficient means had been sent to Ellis Island, where she had been detained three weeks. She had paid for and sent five

telegrams without receiving any answer from her friends. A relative of hers had been refused admittance to see her. She was not allowed to send any more messages to her friends, and was entered for deportation.

A beautiful little Italian boy, with liquid black eyes, full of tears and an old ivory face, was my next sad confidant. His name was Giuseppe del Francesco, and he came from Catanzaro, *via* Naples, with his "cognato." In the crush at the Barge Office he had lost his "cognato," and on coming before the inspector had been sent off to Ellis Island. He had no money. He could neither read nor write. His "cognato" had the address of his friends in New York,

but they had never claimed him. The poor little boy had been a prisoner, without a friend, for ten days. I comforted him as best I could, and told him that as he was among the men and not with the women and children he must be a man and not shed tears. Yet I felt very much that way myself at his story, until he showed me on his thigh three livid bruises from the big stick of the bad man, when another feeling took the place of sorrow.

There were many other cases where, friends having travelled together, the purse-bearer had disappeared and the penniless partner had been consigned to the island. Several Polish Jews were in this plight.

At five o'clock we were ordered upstairs for "supper." It was distributed in one of the upper saloons adjoining the women's bagnio. We passed in a long line round the room. A man with filthy hands filled our hats or handkerchiefs with mouldy prunes. Another thrust two lumps of bread into our hands. Supervising the distribution was a foul-mouthed Bowery rough, in his shirt-sleeves, who danced upon one of the tables and poured forth upon us torrents of obscene and blasphemous abuse.

Nor did he content himself with this demonstration of the contempt in which he held us, for I saw him drag one old man, a long-bearded Polish Jew in a gaberdine, past the barrel of prunes by the hair of the

face, and I saw him kick another emigrant, a German, on the head with his heavy boot.

At the far end, by which we had entered, there was a nameless beverage, called coffee, for those who could find a bowl in which to receive it. We were then driven downstairs again to wait for night. So we sat on the floor and chewed our prunes, or smoked, and watched the light on the statue of Liberty illuminating the world. And in many tongues many things were said in this connection.

As some were amusing themselves sitting on the bulwarks in throwing their prune-stones into the water, one of the guards came running up, and said he,

"You come down off there or I'll knock the stuffin' out of yer."

Of the many prisoners, most were detained for want of means, some to wait till they were claimed by friends or relations, and some on the doctor's report. Many of the old men had "senility" or "debility" marked on their cards. My services as translator of these detention cards were much in request. I am afraid that from pity and sympathy, the translator was a traitor here also.

At one moment, I fancied that I was not, as I had thought, the only Englishman on board the *Narragansett* prison-ship. I noticed a tall, fairhaired young man dressed in a British-looking ulster, who held him-

self aloof from the rest of us, and bent over the taffrail. He looked so profoundly miserable that I thought I would try to cheer him up and made an effort to engage him in conversation. I began by offering a cigarette, but "I does not use zem" he said and turned away. I learned next day that he was a Norwegian journalist who had come over to the States with his bride, as a correspondent to some Scandinavian papers. When I learned his quality I was somewhat amused at the way in which he had let slip the opportunity of collecting materials for an article which would have caused a sensation amongst the Norwegians, democratic as they are. He paid no attention to anything or anybody, but

seemed very miserable and much humiliated. It is true that his bride was a prisoner also and that he was separated from her.

In the many conversations I had that afternoon with various people of various nationalities, in almost every instance I heard the blame for all suffering laid on the agent who had sold the steamship ticket without troubling to explain the American emigration laws. Some sturdy Russians declared that if they were sent to Hamburg, the agent in that town would pass an evil quarter-of-an-hour. Many of those on the Narragansett must have appeared to the persons who sold them their tickets in Europe as quite unfit to meet the requirements of the law. It was obvious at a

first glance. The agents who sold them their tickets did so well knowing that these poor people would not be admitted to the States but would be sent back after undergoing great suffering, privation and outrage, a certainty which did not prevent them from taking the poor fellows' money, often their very last resources, obtained as in the woman Levata, whose case I have described, by the sale of every bit of property they possess. It is the agents who break the U.S. law, and it is their victims who have to suffer for it.

CHAPTER VI

L. P. C.*

BEFORE we separated for the night we discussed the chances of escape. Swimming from the Island to Liberty Island seemed a possible feat, but then there were the dogs to be remembered. It was also known that the slave master carried a revolver and could shoot straight. Yet that very week a Jewish gentleman had taken to his heels, and Ellis Island had

* Let Pass Conditionally.

seen his face no more. He had been employed at the Barge Office in fetching beer and lemonade for the staff in the detention room, and on one trip into the cellar had omitted to return. We toasted him, we mozzeltoffed him in ice-water, of which, by the way, there was plenty.

At eight, for very *ennui*, we went to our bunks. Mine was below in the hold, where there was little air and excess of stench. About a hundred beds in double tiers ran down each side of the room. We were fortunate in having bunks. Often the number of prisoners far exceeds the sleeping accommodation, and then many have to sleep on the bare and verminous boards. The hold in which we lay was

brilliantly illuminated with the electric light. My Roumanian friend had reserved me an upper bunk next to his, had procured me three blankets, and made my bed for me. He lay on my right. On my left was a sturdy, middle-aged Italian, who was groaning dismally and was invoking all the blessed Saints of Paradise. I asked him what ailed him, and he told me that his *miseria* surpassed human belief, and this was the story that he told me in his picturesque dialect :—

"My name is Giuseppe Dalessandro. I came to New York from Rio Janeiro some days ago. I paid for my passage, three hundred thousand reis. I had a little money with me. Some son of a dog

stole it out of my box. Then I worked as a cook, thirteen days I worked, and injured my thumb, as you see. And they never paid me a centesimo for my work, and I was disembarked at New York without a cent in my pocket. They asked me have you *denari.* I said no. So they said I must come here. I have been here two days, leading the life of a dog. Yet I have a wife and daughters in New York, and a sister and brother-in-law. I have food and a house and money there. And yet here I am in prison."

"What was the name of the ship you came on?" I asked.

"Some outlandish name," he answered. "I have it on this scrap of paper."

So saying, he handed me a slip of paper. I looked at it and read the name, "Wordsworth."

"That makes us almost kinsmen," I said. "That's my mother's maiden name. And so you were a victim of the *Wordsworth?*"

He only groaned and called on Santo Giuseppe, and the Figlio della Madonna.

Then I said to him :—

"But why not write to your wife?"

"Write? That is easily said. I tell you I have not one soldo. Who is to pay the postage of my letter?"

"Do you mean to say you have been imprisoned here for two days for the want of two cents?"

"Precisemente. I asked them yonder to write for me to 109 Sullivan Street, and they gave no answer."

And then he groaned again. So I comforted Giuseppe by telling him that, although a pauper emigrant myself, "it would run to" a two-cent stamp and a sheet of paper, and promised to occupy myself with him on the morrow.

He said, "You are now my friend. I will prove it to you." And, comforted, he went to sleep.

For me to sleep was out of question. The glare of the electric lamps, the groans of the nightmare-ship as each prisoner rolled and turned on his comfortless couch, the distant sobbing of women and children,

the noisy clamour of Russian peasants playing cards on the filthy floor, the hunger of the body and the surfeit of sorrow of the soul, all went to banish sleep. So I sat up on my wire mattress and watched the sleeping crowd, and observed with interest the poor Jews, hats on head, swaying to and fro in their nightly orisons. I think that, with the exception of three or four of us, all the prisoners in that rank hold belonged to the unhappy race.

And so night dragged on. At half-past four the Portuguese came down, and with his stick aroused the sleepers. Again the Jews fell to their prayers, this time wrapped sinhawls about their heads and shoulders,

each wearing on his forehead the cube which represents the tables of the ten commandments. By my side a little Christian boy knelt on the floor and prayed fervently. Squatting on his bed was a man in a red shirt, who again and again made upon his breast the sign of the cross.

There was no breakfast, not even a crust of bread, and though for the men this mattered little, it must have been hard on the women, and dangerous for the little children to be turned out, empty of stomach, in the cold, raw morning. Nothing was obtainable until several hours later.

Giuseppe began his functions of friend at once. He assisted me at my toilet, by brushing dust and vermin off my coat.

He impounded my bag and would not hear of my carrying it. "I am your friend," he said. "This is the *amicizia*." And he stood guard over my poor belongings as though he would have been rather pleased if anybody had tried to touch them.

At six we were driven on to the barge; a tug took us by the arm and hustled us across the river and once more we were landed at the Barge Office. Here a chunk of bread was thrust into our hands and if one could find a bowl—there was about one bowl to every twenty prisoners—he might stand a chance if he could fight and dush, of getting a ladleful of some nameless fluid. Women and children who couldn't struggle and fight just went without

any. The man over the malodorous cauldron found the heavy ladle a useful weapon of assault and as a pleasing intermezzo at breakfast, we saw him 'fetch' a man a blow in the mouth. Then a square fight broke out and we had a sample of Bowery science. The man attacked was an Italian and fought as Italians do. When at last the other warders tore him off the ladle-hero, he made most blood-curdling threats, and joining the tips of his thumb and forefinger together waved his hand to and fro.

The fingers thus placed, form a hole and in Neapolitan mimicry this hole is symbolical of the hole the man using the gesture hopes and intends to make in your most vital parts.

Hours went by. Now and then some fortunate person was called inside the railed-off partition and greeted by friends (admitted by a printed form issued by the steamship company to the Superintendent of Immigration), and presently departed, radiant. Telegrams kept coming in, and as the names were called out crowds surged expectantly round the official. Elsewhere telegrams were being taken down by other officials.

I had puzzled over the letters "L. P. C." on my detention card, a mention I had seen on many of the cards of my fellow-prisoners. Some-one had said it was a very bad sign indeed, that it meant certain exclusion. It had amused me to

fit words to the initials, and in this pastime I had spent much of the night. *Laissé Pour Compte* at first suggested itself as appropriate. "Let People Complain," "Let Paupers Come," were two other brilliant inspirations. But it appears the initials stand for "Let Pass Conditionally," and the cases so ticketed are further inquired into. Towards ten o'clock the "L. P. C."s were called down to the end of the detention room and our cards collected. I handed mine over the table which stood between me and the scrubby German who was officiating.

You should have seen the man's expression of offended dignity at such off-hand treatment. I was violently ordered

to come round and give up "der card proberbly."

I gave it up properly with a meek obeisance into the bargain, and then, together with about twenty other people, whose cases, either for definite exclusion or admittance, seemed to the board susceptible of being dealt with in a summary manner, I was called out of the detention room and marched into a railed-in pen below the big hall where the emigrants first enter. I saw the S.S. men again at work, as brutal as ever, and I witnessed one act of downright violence committed upon a wretched old Italian woman.

In tearing something from her hand, the S. S. man acted so brutally that

the old woman went sprawling on the floor.

The Norwegian journalist, reunited to his bride, was in the pen with me. He was a little less gloomy, and we had some conversation.

Gradually we were weeded out. After waiting in my cage—and it was nothing but a cage with bars on every side and even overhead—for about two hours, which were spent in watching the handling of a whole shipload of emigrants that had been shot in to America that morning. What I saw was all in absolute confirmation of what I had concluded before, as to the American system.

At last I was summoned before the

Board, and while awaiting my turn saw one of the saddest sights of all the sad ten days. A young Hungarian girl, who was about to become a mother, had come to New York to find the father of her child. His sister was present, and swore that her brother was a mere lad of seventeen, who was earning but three dollars a week as a plumber's apprentice. The girl swore that he was a man of twenty-five, who had been in the army. The four men of the board showed some heart, and though they had to apply the law and to tell the broken-hearted and sobbing girl that she must go back, they expressed themselves very forcibly on "the dirty, mean, contemptible" people who had compassed her ruin.

The Board before which we were to be laid in turn, was composed of three or four men behind a long desk, all in various attitudes of languor and indifference. One of them, who hid behind this mask a most surprising store of energy, had the most wonderful knowledge of modern languages that I have ever seen in any man. He did not only know every European and most Oriental tongues, but a great variety of dialects also. I heard him speak Assyrian, Turkish, Greek, Yiddish, Platt-Deutsch, and Neapolitan, besides a number of other languages. And the way in which he cross-examined the prisoners in these various tongues, showed an astonishing familiarity with the idioms. He took some

pride too in his acquirements, as well and most justifiably he might, and after each examination was concluded would remark for the information of his one-tongued colleagues: "That's Yiddish," or "That's Finnish," or whatever the language might be.

For a person interested in philology the séance was an interesting one, and such of the stories as I could understand were precious human documents. One little piece of knowledge which I acquired that morning was as to how the Jews, who come to America without any patronymic, invest themselves with a family name.

A Jew was applying for the release of

his brother-in-law, and being asked his name said :

"Baeker, Moses Baeker."

"And what is your trade?"

"Baeker."

"Oh, you're a baker. But what is your name?"

"Baker."

"Oh, I see. These fellows," said the interpreter, turning to his collegues, "have no name when they come here, and so take that of their trade."

This Commissioner must be an invaluable servant to the State. He is one of the shrewdest men I have ever observed. His cross-examination of the prisoners was a masterpiece of the art, and no trickery

had any chance with him. The Emigration Laws, such as they are, have in him a most vigilant defender. Two or three cases in which attempts were made to circumvent the law were exposed and confounded by him in a masterly style. In one case some letters written by the prisoner from the detention-room had got into his hands—I have indicated how this is done—and these were produced against the man. He had implored a friend to pose as a relative so as to go surety for him and thus obtain his release.

Whilst I was awaiting my turn, I had been considering my position. The question was should I act so as to court further detention. When I first embarked

on this adventure, I had intended to go through the whole programme, and after detention at Ellis Island to be sent back to Europe. But when I formed that plan I did not know that this detention might exceed a couple of months, and would certainly not be less than three or four weeks. Now there was nothing more to be learned at Ellis Island or in the Barge Office. I had seen enough during those two days to form a fair opinion of the faults of the system and of the abominable way in which it was applied. And again I felt that my nerves would stand little more suffering. If my temperature stood at 38° on landing, it must have gone up several degrees after my night on the

nightmare ship. Also I was fainting for want of food, for I had taken nothing for thirty hours, for the simple reason that the bread which was all that had been given me was quite uneatable, and I had been able to get nothing else. It never even occurred to me that the handful of mouldy prunes, or the bowl of greasy fluid were articles of human food.

I had no curiosity to see New York, but I hankered after a bath and a shave. I had not even had a proper wash for ten days.

I therefore resolved to say nothing to prejudice my case but to take my chance. If the Board released me so much the better. If I was sent back to the horrors

of Ellis Island, well then, as a Turk who had preceded me had said : "Kismet."

It was fortunate, perhaps, for me that things happened as they did, for from my recent experiences after the conclusion of my "Cry of the Poor" journey, I am led to believe that a fortnight of horror and starvation on Ellis Island would have ended in a complete breakdown. It has taken me just ten months to get back to life again.

At last my turn came and I was called up and ordered to make a declaration on oath. Such as it was, varying but little from my previous declaration, it satisfied the Commissioners. Possibly my attitude of complete indifference, contrasting with the

anxiety expressed by my fellow-prisoners, mpressed them. Anyhow they handed me a yellow card and passed me over to the warder who had brought me in. As I was being marched out, I remembered my friend Giuseppe. What would he think of me if I deserted him after my promises. I ought at least to give him a dollar or two to enable him to communicate with his wife.

So I said to my gaoler pointing to the steps that led to the detention-room :—

" There's a poor Italian chap in——"

But he shut my mouth and snapped at me, and said he :—

" Stow that and don't be a fool. You consider yourself lucky to have got out

with the little money you have got, and don't you go bothering about any Italians."

As we passed down the corridor, I saw my Norwegian colleague, more dismal than ever, speaking through the bars of his cage to a fellow countryman. It appeared he was not to be released as yet.

There was as much formality about getting out of the Barge office as there must have been in leaving the Bastille. I was in custody till the last moment, when, having reached a large hall, in which a crowd of people waiting to see the prisoner-friends were penned up in different groups. The warder left me with a push

on the shoulder. "Go to make your fortune," he said.

And so out into New York, to be immediately assailed by touts of every description. It made me feel quite important to be so solicited after having for so long been treated like a noxious animal.

Everybody was rushing about, with such an exaggeration of busyness that they reminded me of the fussy clown in the circus. I too had business on hand, and of an urgent nature. This was to try and help my poor friends in the horrible gaol I had just left. So after a wash and a meal in a Battery eating-house, where I was abominably cheated, although known to

be an emigrant just landed, I hurried up Broadway to the G.P.O.

Here I filled a telegram to Mrs. Dalessandro, 109 Sullivan Street.

"Husband detained since three days at Ellis Island. Get him out before nothing is left of him."

The young lady who took this telegram, and who, although a young man was clasping her waist whilst she attended to her official duties, had been terribly severe of aspect, deigned to smile after she had read it.

I next got a directory and looked up an Italian benevolent society, and having found an address, hastened off to see if anything could be done for Maria Levata,

and little di Francesco who had all those bruises on his leg. But the gentlemen who received me deplored his inability to help them. "You can tell me nothing about the cruelties practised at Ellis Island," he said, "that I do not know."

At one or two other places where I went, the same answer was given me. There was nothing to be done. I was helpless and I resigned myself.

At least in the case of Guiseppe Dalessandro, I had been able to do some good. Next day in the afternoon I made my way to Sullivan Street, in a quarter of New York which is divided up amongst Italians and negroes.

I found that 109 Sullivan Street was a

substantial house and most of it was in the occupation of the Dalessandro family. I was received by a very pretty young woman, who ushered me into a well-furnished parlour, where a charming little girl was playing. Some elderly females were sitting in this room.

My telegram had been duly received. The Signora Dalessandro, I was told, had hurried off at once to claim her spouse. But the Barge office is reluctant to loose its prey, and though it was early in the afternoon when she arrived there, she was told after waiting some hours, that it was too late that day, that Guiseppe had been sent back to Ellis Island, and that she must come on the morrow. "She went off

this morning," continued her daughter, "and we are expecting her back with father at any moment."

A young tram-conductor then entered the room.

"No," he said in answer to a question of mine "Guiseppe Dalessandro is not my father, but I hope soon to call him by that name." The lucky young fellow was engaged to marry the beautiful Italian girl.

Mrs. Dalessandro was by profession a midwife, and it much amused me to notice that the elderly gossips who were waiting in the room seemed to imagine that I had called on business. They were talking in some dialect which I did not understand,

but I imagined some such conversation as :

"He is as pale as a muffin."

"And so he ought to be if he has the feelings of a man," from the memorable scene where Mr. Pecksniff goes to summon Mrs. Gamp.

At last the couple arrived arm in arm and radiant. Neither Guiseppe nor myself recognised each other. Such was the transformation that a bath, a shave and a change of clothes had brought about in both. But when he did recognise me, he greeted me most warmly, and as for his Signora, a stout, motherly woman, arrayed in black satin and wearing abundant jewelry, she nearly embraced me. She

could not satisfy herself in heaping benefits upon me. She sent one girl for schooners of beer, and another for the best cigarettes. She wanted me to eat cake. She darted into a back room and came out flourishing a bunch of dollar notes and wished to enrich me. Meanwhile Guiseppe was telling the picturesque story of his sufferings. Now and again pointing to me he would say : " Il Cristo m'a mandato quest 'amico," and he said it twenty times if once.

When I left him rejoicing in the bosom of his family, with the tram conductor clasping his daughter at his side, his wife embracing him and his little girl on his knee, he called after me never to forget that I was his friend, at any time—mille

anni fa—and under any circumstances. I am sure he meant it. So that for a few cents I had acquired at least one friend in this world.

CHAPTER VII

Back to Europe

I was forced to spend several days in New York before I could get ship back to Europe, for the Paris Exhibition was then open and all the places on the outgoing steamers had been booked months in advance. In the end I determined to return, as I had come, in the steerage. I preferred this in spite of my recent experiences to the prospect of a prolonged stay in New York, which at any time must be a very Inferno

to those whose nerves are shaken, but which just then, in the midst of a terrific "hot snap," was simply unbearable. The stupid, useless noises of the tramcars—often thirty to the minute—the clattering and rumbling of the elevated railway, the banging and the clanging of every kind of conveyance rushing in wild haste to all sorts of absurd places, which I could not conceive anyone ever wishing to visit, the buzzing of the electric fans, the tap-tap-tapping of the typewriters harassed to the point of madness the overheated brain, which through the optic nerves already found itself in a state of high and indignant rebellion. The silly fussiness of the citizens, the nightmare houses, the monot-

onous checkboard disposal of the streets, the hideous visions of dyspepsia evoked by the spectacle of the Quick Lunch bars, or of the ice-cream soda shops, met with at every turn, where pale-faced maidens gorged themselves on fizzing masses of multi-coloured mud, the unpleasing fops aping an impossible aristocracy, the many strong-minded and eccentric females, the odious negroes loafing at the corners—in architecture as in humanity, varied as both were, there was not one pleasant thing on which to rest the eye.

I now realized to the full the horror of a nightmare which I had once had, in which I dreamed that I was in New York without the means to return home. And the New

York of my dream was not the New York that I saw.

So I waited with such patience as I could command for a steamer to take me home, and employed my time when not writing, in visiting the Battery. I found that it was quite the usual pastime of the loafers there to watch the arrival and the departure of the barges of emigrants and I never once heard in the groups regaling their eyes on this degrading spectacle an expression of pity for the poor people.

All round the Battery I discovered little dirty spider-webs which had been spun for catching such of the emigrants as might slip through the clutches of the Barge office. Here were the purveyors to the

sweating-dens, and had time allowed, I should have made it my duty to investigate this traffic. It is obvious that the misery of the prisoners in Ellis Island, who have neither money nor friends is traded upon and speculated in, and that there is a dirty market built upon their distress.

I had at least occasion to convince myself of the fact that in spite of their professed contempt for foreign cheap labour many New York employers do not hesitate to take advantage of the hopeless position of the detained emigrants.

Given the choice between deportation and the acceptance of a starvation wage, many able-bodied men and women pass into the hands of the local sweaters.

These are kept well informed as to the "lots" at the Barge Office, and occasional visits are paid to the slave-ship Narragansett.

Two sturdy and well-educated Germans who were detained with me, had in this way received offers of employment at a big restaurant as plate-washers at a third of the rates current in the plate-washing market. A Swiss labourer, who had been claimed by a sweaters' agent, and liberated, was in my presence, in one of the "dives" near the Battery, offered a wage of fifteen dollars a month for an appalling list of menial duties.

The two Germans, by the way, had come to Ellis Island, after having been

passed on landing at the Barge Office. They had spent their first evening in New York "on the spree," and had been robbed of their money. On complaining to the police, they were treated as pauper emigrants and handed over to the Emigration Commissioners who had sent them to Ellis Island. It appears, therefore, that a foreigner remains subject to the emigration laws, and is subject to detention and deportation, even after he has been passed by the board and has entered New York.

During the few days in which I had to wait in New York for my steamer home, I had many conversations with Americans in various stations on their emigration

laws and their application. With regard to the laws, everybody agreed that they were necessary, and I am quite sure that one of the most popular features of the new Republican ticket was the promise of further legislation towards the restriction of emigration.

With regard to the treatment of the detained immigrants, most people admitted that it was incredibly barbarous, but excused the Republic on the ground that these abuses had not been exposed before, and added that if "enough stink" could be raised on the subject, matters might possibly be remedied.

Many, however, reverted to the argument that "the people did not want these emi-

grants, anyway." As to the employment on Ellis Island as warders of the dirtiest ruffians in New York, that was a question of "political pull."

Exact figures as to the numbers of emigrants who are rejected and deported each month were not obtainable. But the number is large. Sometimes more than a hundred go back by one ship. They are conveyed at the cost of the company back to the port at which they embarked.

This may be five or six hundred miles or more from their former homes. As a rule, they have spent their last means to pay their passages to America, and so are thrown back into European ports penniless.

For the cruel and unmerited sufferings

which to many thousands are the result, the European agents of the various shipping companies are mainly responsible.

Careless about any consideration beyond the commission which they make on every emigrant's ticket which they issue, they accept passage money from anybody who offers it. It is a matter of indifference to them whether the applicant fulfils or not, in physique and purse, the conditions of the American law, of which more than 90 per cent. of the rejected emigrants are totally ignorant.

If the American Legislature were to force—as it could do—the shipping companies to refund the deported immigrants the entire sum disimbursed by them for

their journey from the place of starting to to the States, the agents would very soon cease to embark people who must obviously have no possible chance of acceptance.

As to the way in which the law is applied in America, is not what I have written a sufficient indictment of a cruel and inhuman system? No civilised nation has a right to starve and brutalise women, children, and helpless old men. The companies could be forced to provide, pending deportation, for the decent maintenance of their customers.

It seems incredible that, as I heard in New York, each company has to pay 25 cents a day for any passenger detained at Ellis Island. The food supplied is not

worth a fifth of that sum. The sleeping accommodation on the Narragansett is, in busy times, in the proportion of one bed to every three or four prisoners—the rest sleep on the floor. Can this miserable prison be run for a profit?

I have described what food I was able by struggling to lay hands upon during my thirty hours' detention. Two lumps of bread, a handful of mouldy prunes, and a bowl of some liquid filth. Such was the return for the 30 cents disbursed on my account. Many got nothing but the bread. Nobody could properly nourish himself even on the whole rations, for everything was of the worst quality. Excitement and ice-water are the main sustenance of most

of the Ellis Island prisoners. The men have, also, their tobacco and the women their tears. When a woman is crying for herself and her children, she forgets her hunger. The miserable quantity and quality of the food supplied are speculated upon, and in the detention room are two stalls where coarse viands, pastry, bread, cheese, sausages and so forth are retailed at high prices to the half-starved emigrants who have any money to spare. If the prisoners were properly fed there should be no need for such stalls, for every cent a prisoner on Ellis Island may possess, he needs for the future.

My return voyage on the *Aquitaine*,

although passed in the steerage, was a pleasure-trip as compared to the voyage out. The food and the accommodation were the same, but how greatly the behaviour of the stewards differed. We were no longer helpless emigrants, but the citizens of a great Republic and our rights were respected. And we took a good deal more than our rights, for we invaded the promenade deck and swarmed all over the ship. There was amongst us a stowaway lad of fifteen who had come all the way from Carbonville, in Iowa, to see the Paris Exhibition without a cent in his pocket. He had "beaten" the railway companies, and now had "beaten" the Compagnie Transatlantique. I often

saw him amongst the first-class passengers, and once I noticed him engaging in conversation no less august a personage than Mr. Fischer, one of the trio of Boer delegates. I met amongst the crowd a few rejected undesirables, notably a wretched old Croate, who told me that he would land at Havre with six shillings in his pocket. He was lame with a diseased foot. He complained of the way the stewards had treated him. They had demanded a dollar off him "for attendance" and because he wouldn't give it, six shillings being his entire fortune, they would give him nothing to eat. "I asked one of them for a drink of water," he told me "and the man pointed to a tap. I filled

the tin and swallowed it at a gulp, for I was dying of want. And it was sea-water. The trick was played on me on purpose."

But for the most part we were a prosperous crowd. Many had piles of good substantial luggage, and most were well dressed. Not a few of the steerage passengers were just going over to Europe for a holiday. There was a young waiter from Boston who was going for a month's shooting in the Tyrol, and who had his guncase with him. Nearly all proposed to visit the Paris Exhibition, and I could not help contrasting the mental atmosphere in the steerage of the *Aquitaine* with that of *La Champagne*. Here there was none of that anxiety which gnawed our hearts

on the going out, anxiety which would have increased ten-fold if we had only known what really awaited us. On the *Aquitaine* we knew that, however poor we might be, or diseased, or criminal, we should land and move freely forward to any country we chose to select, and I could not help wondering whether if certain refusals were enacted by Europe on the human rubbish which America shoots over into Europe, noisy, immoral, vulgar crowds of evil life and bad example, the States might not be led to act towards our emigrants with a little more humanity.

The voyage passed without incident, save that just before we reached Le Havre de Grace, the body of a returning emigrant

who had died on board, was buried at sea. That is to say, it was nailed in a box with some bits of old iron in it, and was pitched overboard without a word of prayer—the ship going at full speed—amidst a crowd of pipe-smoking passengers, not one of whom raised his hat. I was so indignant at such obsequies given to a human being, that on reaching Havre I described the outrage in one of the papers published there.

After landing at Havre, as I was walking towards the town, I saw comfortably ensconced in one of the carriages of the special train to Paris, the stowaway lad from Carbonville. He was grinning all over. "I shall get under the seat," he

said, "before they come round for the tickets."

A large crowd was waiting on the quay to watch our arrival. I fancy our prosperous appearance and the aspect of our good and substantial luggage, trumpeting abroad the wealth and the possibilities of the New World from which we had come might arouse in many hearts of those who were looking on, hopes and ambitions hard to realise.

If this little book helps a few people in Europe to grasp the significance of the American Immigration Laws and consequently dissuades those incapacitated from risking the voyage on the chance of admission to the States, and so spares much

suffering and bitter disappointment, I shall readily console myself for all of unpleasantness through which I passed and have had afterwards to endure. That it may arouse to some sense of their duty the big steamship companies and the emigration agents all over Europe is also my hope, if not my expectation.

THE END

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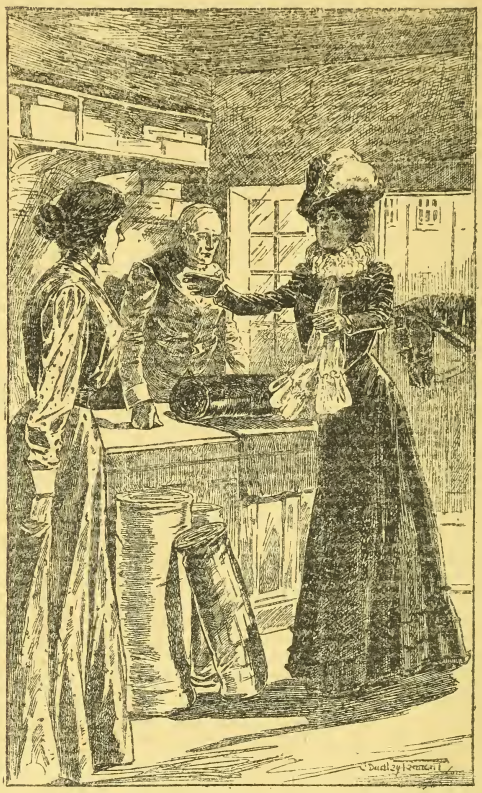

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